

RIGHT OF ALIENS TO HOLD LANDS IN THE TERRITORIES.

JANUARY 9, 1897.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CATRON, from the Committee on the Territories, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 9709.]

The Committee on the Territories have had under consideration House bill 9709, and report the same back without amendment and recommend its passage.

The bill refers solely to the rights of aliens to acquire and hold lands in the Territories and not in the District of Columbia. It is an amendment of an act entitled "An act to restrict the ownership of real estate in the Territories to American citizens," etc., approved March 3, 1887, except so far as it affects land in the District of Columbia, and provides that that section shall not apply (in the Territories) to lands which may be acquired by any alien who shall become a bona fide resident of the United States or shall declare his intention to become a citizen of the United States.

Also, that if any such resident alien shall cease to be a bona fide resident of the United States, then such alien shall have ten years from the time he ceases to be such bona fide resident in which to alienate his lands.

Also, that persons not citizens of the United States shall not be prevented from acquiring or holding lots or parcels of lands in any incorporated or platted city, town, or village, or in any mine or mining claim in any of the Territories.

That aliens shall not be prevented from acquiring lands by inheritance or in the ordinary course of justice in the collection of debts, nor from acquiring liens on real estate, nor from lending money and securing the same upon real estate, nor from enforcing such lien, provided any such lands so acquired shall be sold within ten years or the same shall escheat to the Government. It also provides for the mode of enforcing the escheat.

The present law has operated to practically exclude all foreign capital from the Territories, and has in a great measure paralyzed business there; the mining industries have been very much crippled thereby, and improvements in cities and towns have been greatly retarded, as no foreign capital has been invested in the same since the passage of the act of which this is an amendment.

The great object of the amendment is, however, to increase the investment of foreign money in the construction of dams, reservoirs, and ditches for irrigation and mining purposes, so as to develop the vast resources of those arid regions and bring them into a profit-producing condition, and furnish homes to the surplus population of the States.

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Such moneys are not now accessible because of the present law. It is believed that much capital from foreign countries will be soon invested in such ditches, reservoirs, and dams if this bill becomes a law, and those arid regions be very greatly populated and improved by the people of the United States desiring to locate on the public lands. The proposed bill provides that it shall not be construed to alter or change in any manner the laws regulating the disposal of the public domain.

Your committee believe the bill in question will prove of great benefit to the Territories and to the whole Union, and they therefore recommend its passage.